GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6317
ANSWERED ON:12.04.2017
Payment Issue of Workers
Reddy Shri A.P. Jithender

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of migrant workers in Qatar have gone unpaid for up to four months and if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government to resolve this issue;

(b) the measures undertaken by the Government to ensure the protection of interests of Indian migrant workers in the Gulf nations;

(c) whether the Government has identified the reasons behind such problems which persist despite reforms like the introduction of a Wage Protection System and if so, the details thereof; and

(d) whether any special provisions have been made to promote the welfare of women workers and if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) The Indian Mission in Qatar has reported only one specific case involving 162 Indian nationals, employed with M/S Scale Trading & Contracting Company, who had not been paid salary for 5 months and denied final settlement and exit permit with passport. Mission had taken up the matter with the Qatari authorities. The Mission arranged the air tickets from Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) and repatriated 160 Indian emigrant workers while the remaining 2 opted to continue working in the company.

Indian Mission receives complaints from Indian emigrants, from time to time, regarding violation of contractual terms, adverse working conditions, wage related issues, employer related problems, medical and insurance related problems and compensation/death claims. On receipt of such complaints, the same are addressed by Indian Mission immediately by taking them up with the concerned authorities in Qatar for immediate resolution.

(b) The Government has taken several steps to safeguard the interests of Indian emigrants to the Gulf countries, these are:

(i) Labour and Manpower Cooperation MoUs/Agreements are already in place with the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries that provide the institutional framework to comprehensively discuss and review labour related issues.

(ii) The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) provides assistance to Overseas Indian nationals in times of distress.

(iii) The Indian Workers Resource Centre (IWRC) has been set up in Dubai to provide guidance and counselling on all matters pertaining to overseas Indian workers.

(iv) Four more IWRCs have been approved in Sharjah (UAE), Riyadh and Jeddah (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia).

(v) Shelter homes for distressed Indian nationals have been setup in Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE and Malaysia.

(vi) Missions in Gulf countries also conduct Open Houses on a regular basis where workers can seek redressal of their grievances.

(vii) Missions in Gulf countries have also established 24x7 helplines and Toll Free help lines for the benefit of Indian workers to seek help.

(viii) The on-line MADAD portal enables the emigrant workers and their family members to register their consular grievances online and track their redressal.

(ix) A multi-lingual 24X7 Helpline of Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC) in Gurugram, Haryana provides information, guidance and grievance redressal on all issues and problems pertaining to overseas employment of Indian nationals.

(x) Migrant Resource Centres have also been setup in Kochi, Hyderabad, Chennai and Lucknow.

(xi) Grievances related to Overseas Employment in notified Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries including gulf countries, can be logged in directly by emigrants/ relatives/ Overseas Workers Resource's Centre (OWRC) on eMigrate portal. These grievances

are settled by respective jurisdictional Protectors of Emigrants (PoEs) as per laid down procedure.

(c) The Government of Qatar launched a Wage Protection System (WPS) in November 2015, which made it mandatory for all companies to pay salaries of their workers directly into their bank accounts. However, there are other reasons also, due to which workers sometimes face problems, such as:

(i) disputes with sponsors/company;
(ii) underpayment of salary/allowances;
(iii) non-payment of overtime;
(iv) premature termination of services;
(v) non-release of passports;
(vi) unhygienic living conditions in camps; and
(vii) non-availability of proper medical facilities etc.

Indian Mission takes up these issues immediately with concerned Government authorities for prompt redressal.

(d) To promote the welfare and protection of women workers, Government has taken further measures in restricting the recruitment of ECR passport holding Indian female workers, only through six State Government recruiting agencies w.e.f. 2nd August, 2016 to avoid their harassment by foreign employers. The Foreign Employers who intend to recruit Indian female domestic workers have to register themselves on e-Migrate System with the respective Missions and deposit a bank guarantee equivalent to US$2500/- and after registration, they can approach any of these six agencies for recruitment. The age restriction of 30 years has also been made mandatory in respect of all women emigrants emigrating on ECR passport, irrespective of the nature/category of employment. Further, mandatory Insurance and medical cover is extended to all Indian workers including women, through Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana (PBBY).
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